



# *Meeting in Print*

December 2023 (Ed. 29)

## ***"A Season of Self Reflection"***

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- Caryn T.

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## **Greetings from your CoDA Co-NNections Committee**

Welcome to the quarterly issue of Meeting in Print, a CoDA recovery and support publication. Recovery is for everyone, and we hope you enjoy reading these shares. Meeting in Print contains CoDA-approved literature, as well as shares, uplifting quotes and artistic material from CoDA members. We hope you find this issue both enjoyable and insightful. Please feel free to contact us with comments and suggestions – and, as always, *your contributions!*

Warmly,

Your Meeting in Print Subcommittee

# Opening Readings

## **The Preamble of Co-Dependents Anonymous**

Co-Dependents Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women whose common purpose is to develop healthy relationships. The only requirement for membership is a desire for healthy and loving relationships. We gather together to support and share with each other in a journey of self-discovery – learning to love the self. Living the program allows each of us to become increasingly honest with ourselves about our personal histories and our own codependent behaviors. We rely upon the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions for knowledge and wisdom.

These are the principles of our program and guides to developing honest and fulfilling relationships with ourselves and others. In CoDA, we each learn to build a bridge to a Higher Power of our own understanding, and we allow others the same privilege. This renewal process is a gift of healing for us. By actively working the program of Co-Dependents, we can each realize a new joy, acceptance, and serenity in our lives.

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## **The Welcome of Co-Dependents Anonymous**

We welcome you to Co-Dependents Anonymous, a program of recovery from codependence, where each of us may share our experience, strength, and hope in our efforts to find freedom where there has been bondage and peace where there has been turmoil in our relationships with others and ourselves.

Most of us have been searching for ways to overcome the dilemmas of the conflicts in our relationships and our childhoods. Many of us were raised in families where addictions existed -some of us were not. In either case, we have found in each of our lives that codependence is a most deeply rooted compulsive behavior and that it is born out of our sometimes moderately, sometimes extremely dysfunctional families and other systems. We have each experienced in our own ways the painful trauma of the emptiness of our childhood and relationships throughout our lives.

We attempted to use others -our mates, friends, and even our children, as our sole source of identity, value and well-being, and as a way of trying to restore within us the emotional losses from our childhoods. Our histories may include other powerful addictions which at times we have used to cope with our codependence.

We have all learned to survive life, but in CoDA we are learning to live life. Through applying the Twelve Steps and principles found in CoDA to our daily life and relationships both present and past -we can experience a new freedom from our self-defeating lifestyles. It is an individual growth process. Each of us is growing at our own pace and will continue to do so as we remain open to God's will for us on a daily basis. Our sharing is our way of identification and helps us to free the emotional bonds of our past and the compulsive control of our present.

No matter how traumatic your past or despairing your present may seem, there is hope for a new day in the program of Co-Dependents Anonymous. No longer do you need to rely on others as a power greater than yourself. May you instead find here a new strength within to be that which God intended - Precious and Free.

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## **The Twelve Steps of Co-Dependents Anonymous**

1. We admitted we were powerless over others - that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and lives over to the care of God as we understood God.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being, the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. We're entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood God, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to other codependents, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.



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## **The Twelve Traditions of Codependents Anonymous**

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon CoDA unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority – a loving higher power as expressed to our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for membership in CoDA is a desire for healthy and loving relationships.
4. Each group should remain autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or CoDA as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to other codependents who still suffer.
6. A CoDA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the CoDA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary spiritual aim.
7. A CoDA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Co-Dependents Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. CoDA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. CoDA has no opinion on outside issues; hence the CoDA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, films, television, and all other forms of public communication.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions; ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

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# Community Shares

## **“Growing in CoDA”**

My life before CoDA was a constant low-grade chaos. On the outside I looked functional; there were no obvious addictions or big issues, but inside I was in more-or-less constant turmoil. I frequently lay awake at night worrying about this or that friendship or family relationship. My relationship with my spouse was on the verge of divorce. My work life was a constant source of stress and anxiety. I didn't even know my own bank balance. As Step One says my life was "unmanageable", but having grown up in a chaotic home I was adept at 'managing the unmanageable' and anyway wasn't everyone's life unmanageable?

I now understand that the reason my life was so unmanageable was because most of my focus was going outwards onto others (and usually onto things I had no control over). Most of the time I had no idea what I was feeling or needing and thus it was much easier to focus on other peoples' feelings and needs. When I tried to be present with myself, I was met with a black hole or feelings too painful to sit with. This was so uncomfortable that I just continued to prioritise other people, and sometimes if I was 'lucky', they would prioritise me back and that was how I got my needs met. This was of course an unstable way to live that led to confusion and resentment. I felt like a victim most of the time, but I was only dimly aware of what the problem was.

I came into CoDA during the pandemic, when all of my distractions had been snatched away and I was left flailing and unhappy. I was scared and desperate and heard about CoDA through a boundaries course I took online. From that very first meeting I felt I had found my people and come home. Finally, after a life spent feeling lost, lonely and like an outsider I feel that I have a family. Meeting after meeting I heard myself in others shares and shared my own struggles and triumphs in a space that felt safe, supportive and free of judgement. I loved the readings, particularly the recovery patterns (the one with both sides – the codependents and

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the recovery) which felt like a map of how to go forward. CoDA is a place where I can be me and feel seen, accepted and supported. I had never felt this in my own family and had been looking for it in every relationship since then, often to disastrous affect. I learned that the most important relationship is with myself and gradually I started to investigate the black hole and find out who I really am away from the coping mechanisms I developed during my childhood.

I am working the Steps in a 'power of five' formed through a meeting I attended regularly. We meet once a week via the internet and share the answers to our questions. We are now on Step Four. I love my group; through them I have learned how to be caring and compassionate with healthy boundaries rather than my previous rescuing and care-taking behaviours which were designed to get approval and control people by making them like me. I have learned acceptance and pride in myself through us sharing our answers and baring our souls week after week - I no longer feel the shame and unworthiness that was my default. I have become so much more empowered and no longer see myself as the victim in every situation. I see myself and my growth and healing reflected in my fellow group members, they inspire me to keep going and to be brave and vulnerable.

I love CoDA meetings and usually attend between 2 and 7 meetings per week. The outreach calls which we can access through an app have been maybe the most supportive element of my recovery, allowing myself to be vulnerable and ask for help, and also learning how to listen and reflect back to the other person, rather than giving advice and trying to fix which was my previous way of being, have caused me to feel less alone and more connected to my fellow travellers. I also journal and read the literature frequently, and listen to the prerecorded talks on CoDA's YouTube channel. I find all the CoDA material so inspiring and supportive, the literature is so intelligent and well written and always gets right to the heart of the matter. I also meditate and use two-way prayer to talk to my higher power. I already meditated before CoDA but I didn't have a concept of a higher power. Nowadays I really believe that there is someone up there looking down on me 24/7 whose job it is to care only about me. As a fellow said "It's like you and higher power riding a bike together; you have to pedal, but HP steers." I love this analogy as it helps remind me that I have to do the work and put my energies in the

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right place, but there is a power greater than me that will guide me (if I let it). I no longer feel I have to control everything that comes my way. And I have so much more peace in my life than I did two years ago when I came into Program.

The most challenging tools for me are my thoughts, I still really struggle to control my thoughts. Often I get completely wrapped up in obsessing about a person or situation I have no control over and my inner peace is disturbed and before I know it I have barely slept and I feel the chaos coming back. This happens less than once a week now, but before CoDA it was several times a week, so I can see I'm making progress and I just need to keep going.

The other thing I still find challenging is setting boundaries. Before CoDA I never set boundaries, I either avoided or exploded in place of having a healthy grown-up conversation about what my needs were. I am so much clearer nowadays about what my needs are, but I've only recently begun to communicate them with others in ways which are healthy and not manipulative and controlling. It's not easy and I get very anxious, but I trust it will get easier if I just stick with it and trust that it's ok to advocate for myself.

KW, 1 year and 10 months in CoDA, 11/10/2022



- *Jim H.*

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## "Climbing Toward Recovery"

We were a family of five. I was the middle child. I had a little brother and a big sister. We lived in a little neighborhood in Central Florida. At age 6, we moved out to Christmas, Florida, and lived on a small 14 acre farm. We would spend the next 7 years trying to make my father's dreams come true.

Dad was bi-polar. His goals were to work hard, hunt or drive his airboat on the weekends, train pit bulls to find wild hogs among the scrub palm uplands along and around the St. John's River.

Work on the farm in Christmas was extremely hard and my father's untreated bi-polar disorder seemed to worsen. Often, he would be gone all weekend, hunting with friends and family, and spending money we didn't have. We had to feed the cows, horses, pigs, chickens, dogs, and spray out the dog pens. I remember being capable of moving (scooching) 50 pound bales of hay by myself when I was 7 or 8 years old. We worked all summer to clear the pastures of roots. He would ride over the land with a tractor and discus that would cut and fold over the dirt revealing the roots of scrub palms for us kids to pick up. We had a trailer that was about 4 X 6 X 2 feet and we had to fill it so full that a root thrown on the pile would roll off onto the ground. If we said the trailer was full, Daddy would throw a root onto the pile. If it didn't roll off, we didn't dare bother him again until we were sure it was full. We were paid 10 cents a day and had Sundays off. We spent our riches every Saturday at Frank's Market or the feed store on candy and soda.

When Dad got upset at us, he pulled his belt off, folded it in half and with his hands holding the two ends of the folded belt, he would push his hands together and then pull them back rapidly making the belt go WHAP! WHAP! This was our warning. Other adults, grandmothers, aunts, used switches if they spanked us. Sometimes Mom used her hand on our butts. But Daddy used his belt, and it seemed like my butt was red a few more times than the others.

Once my brother set me up by lying and I got a spanking. I tried telling my father that I'd been tricked, but he wouldn't listen and spanked me anyway, calling me a liar the whole time. From my room, I heard him say this to my brother, "You won't be in trouble. Tell me the truth. Did you do what she said you did?" My brother answered yes. I waited for my father to come let me out...to apologize... to say sorry for calling me a liar. He did not.

My sister, at age 10, was left in charge of us after school because Mom worked all day and went to night school. My sister had been my best friend, my confidant, my giggling playmate, but now she was my boss. Overnight I lost my mother and the sister I loved so dearly. My mother was gone and in the place of my sister was a 10-year-old with a very responsible job. She was determined to get it right and be an adult. When we picked roots, she went in early to get my brother into the bath and start dinner. I stayed outside helping Daddy until the bats were whirring over my head at twilight, eating the mosquitos that swarmed around me.

I developed a tendency to whine and complain of pain or illness possibly as a response to the work being too hard for my young body and from the emotional loss of a mother to put me to bed and the loss of my young sister/best friend without warning. I began being called "whiney hiney" and "liar", and "dummy." I had learning disabilities and my sister was a genius so teachers would say, "Get your sister to help you." I couldn't compete with her at all, and my

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brother was the boy my father had waited for and finally came. They were both named after my dad, and I wasn't. I tried so hard to be worthy of them. I rubbed feet and spasming calves. I rubbed backs and brought snacks. I learned that flirting with boys got me attention. I switched television channels and did chores that others were responsible for, and I still couldn't earn the love and respect that others seemed to have.

At age 13, my parents were divorced. My sister ran away and got married at 17 abandoning me again. My brother went to live with my dad. My mother remarried and my oldest step-brother came home from the Navy and cornered me in my bedroom. He said, "Just because you're my sister doesn't mean we can't get married." I was scared in my own home. At age 16, I decided I wanted to grow up, move out, get married. I went to the county free doctor and while examining me so that I could get on birth control, he said, "You're a VIRGIN!" I was so embarrassed. He took me to his office and explained that my hymen was very thick and it was going to take a gentle man to be a partner with me someday and he warned me about the possible bleeding.

I went to college on the Early Entrance Program and I ended up losing my virginity at age 17 on a date. Whether it was rape or not, I do not know. He pushed me to drink alcohol and I only remember him screaming at me for all the blood in his father's truck. I left college and married the next guy who asked me. We spent the next 5 years in turmoil. He was abusive in every possible way. I became pregnant within the first few months and carried that baby to term. The day she was due I felt like something was wrong. I tried to get help. I went to the doctor's office, the hospital, and again the hospital. They sent me home twice and by the third time, they let me stay, but by then my baby girl had died inside me. She was born still after an agonizing few hours with Pitocin and nothing else. I truly thought I was dying and told my mother so.

The next pregnancy ended in a motorcycle accident. I can tell who is compassionate by the reaction I get when I tell my story. If someone is judgmental, asking me why I stayed married and having babies with an abusive man OR worse they ask why I was on a motorcycle when I was pregnant after what had already happened with my first baby, I know who they are. They are not self-aware enough to realize that we have all made decisions that we regret. It's easy to judge those whose mistakes ended in something awful. I'm very happy for people whose mistakes didn't turn out as awful as mine. Judging others can be harmful.

Finally, I had a daughter. She was born happy and healthy and slept all night from her first night. Everything went well and things were good for a while with her father. But on my 21st birthday, she became ill. She spent the next year in the hospital on and off and was diagnosed with Cystic Fibrosis which is often eventually a fatal disease after years of suffering. In the summer before I turned 22, I had brought my 2 year old to her regular post hospital check up appointment. Her pediatrician gave me a familiar speech. I was tired of explaining that my daughter's pneumonias always happened in a flash. My mother had insisted it wasn't Cystic Fibrosis and despite 4 sweat-test results that were negative, the doctor continued to say it must be CF. We were awaiting approval for a DNA test that would confirm the doctor's diagnosis. I said nothing that morning when the doctor warned me again "Now don't wait too long this time. If she starts to look ill, bring her to me immediately." I took my daughter to daycare. In a few hours, I received a call from the daycare. They had called 911 and she was being transported to the hospital where I worked. I met them in the Emergency Room. The doctor's office was across the street, and her doctor marched over and began, "I told you to bring her in before she gets this ill!" and I said, "She was in YOUR OFFICE this morning!" The doctor sat stunned realizing that what I said was true. When they finally tested her allergies, she was allergic to many many things. My daughter did NOT have Cystic Fibrosis or any other fatal disease. She needed a

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special diet and allergy shots. She never went to the hospital again as a child. I crumpled in relief.

After my husband started striking me in front of our daughter and he was unable to quit smoking around her, I finally left him for the last time. It was mostly amicable, and our relationship has been amicable since he gave up his parental rights and allowed the second man I married to adopt her when she was four. This man was sent to me by a Higher Power. We started dating when he was a pizza delivery boy and got married after he graduated from college. He has carried me through so much struggle and trauma recovery. We had a son one year after our marriage who has HFA (high functioning autism formerly called Asperger's Syndrome) and a daughter 4 years later, who is her brother's greatest friend and ally. My children all love each other and care for each other very much.

I have been through every therapy imaginable and finally found one that works for me. I am slowly discovering the parts of me and treating them like my children who need love and care and guidance. We enjoy hiking in the mountains and do so at least once per year and despite living in flat Florida, I feel my soul growing and filling every time we are in the mountains.

CoDA changes my life tremendously every day. I started CoDA nearly 2 years ago after 2 years in another 12-Step program. I feel like the person who has climbed out of the pit of deep despair and climbs higher and higher every day towards the summit experiencing great joy and happiness on my journey. Before I found 12-Step recovery, despite my beautiful marriage and three lovely children who had grown into a successful and happy adulthood, sometimes I wanted to die. I cut myself and burned myself sometimes when emotional pain from multiple unresolved tragedies got to be more than I could bear. Therapy wasn't working at all; I just told my story over and over and the therapists listened until she had heard them all and I left and got a new one. I tried hypnotism, EMDR, psychotherapy, and more. I endured hours of neuropsychological testing and tried nearly every pharmaceutically indicated medication that existed. Nothing could make me want to live when the physical pain (fibromyalgia and degenerative disk disease), emotional pain, and anxiety got to be too much. When I could no longer turn to people, drugs, or food to control my pains, there seemed to be nothing left to live for until I found CoDA. I go to daily meetings and work very hard in service to the program that has saved my life. I am living my life now in the beautiful light of the promises which come true for me more and more every day.

Diana N.



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## "Winter Rays of Hope"

Winter's silence grows, nature rests  
Light rays bend around naked Pin Oak limbs  
Promise of nurturing light for next spring's buds  
Hopeful hearts willing to carry on.

Doubts of danger lifting seep through  
Angel rays hover nearby  
Forgiveness calms soulful hearts  
Healing hearts willing to carry on.

Earthly natural wonders devoured amid fateful peril  
Illuminating rays of wakefulness ripple  
Compassionate awareness grows  
Simply walking gently with grace.

Linda Mary Katherine

December 2022

## "Reclaiming my Authentic Self"

Doing the forensic journalistic work of my own childhood, writing it down, getting clear on my real and felt experiences (a story different from my parents' best historical revisionism)... and expressing this at a group level has become a wonderful healing part of my CoDA journey.

What I would like to suggest is that at the core of my Codependency is Toxic Shame.

A rupture of my authentic self that happened in early childhood because of emotional and physical abandonment trauma.

A false self that I created there after to survive life.

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The way this works out in my current adult life is that I am often a human DOING rather than a human being.

When I am a high performing director, writer, film-maker, paid a lot, needed and wanted by others because of my skills, ability to help, my ability to effect change — I feel esteemed.

When I am without work, failing, losing, unrecognized or not needed by others I experience depression, emptiness and an overwhelming feeling of futility.

It becomes difficult for me to waste time, to enjoy hobbies, and trust that my intrinsic worth is not contingent on what I am DOING.

It has been the greatest struggle in my life to just be, accepting my emotions, my authentic self and enjoying any given moment in time.

I believe again this is because of an Early abandonment trauma and an underdeveloped sense of self.

Primarily due to the fact that I was not appropriately mirrored, nurtured or echoed by my mother — I was never in her eyes.

Good mirroring allows a child to express ordinary emotional impulses. Even the likes of jealousy, rage, and defiance — the full gamut of emotions. While the mother holds space without making demands on the child.

Due to my mother's own childhood trauma, her dissociation from reality — I never had the chance to be in her gaze. My true authentic emotional self was too much for her, it wasn't something she had the capacity to connect with.

Largely because she was of poor immigrant stock, unloved by her own mother, poor, and running from the sudden death of her father that she was blamed for.

I still have visceral early childhood memories of feeling unseen while I witness her anxieties and immense suffering.

She used me as an object to calm her anxieties, fill her emptiness and receive the love she could not get from the world.

It did not help that her trauma bonded to my father after he did a stint in Federal Prison. Worse was that dad turned out to be physically abusive and an adulterer.

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You could say the appropriate mirroring in my case was reversed and the natural order of healthy attachment was flipped on its head.

There is also a term for this, it is called parentification.

Parentification occurs when a child is regularly expected to provide emotional or practical support for a parent, instead of receiving that support themselves. The role reversal of parentification can disrupt the natural process of maturing, causing long-term negative effects on a child's physical and mental health.

Mom attempted to use others -- mates, friends, and even her children -- as her sole source of identity, value, and well-being and as a way of trying to restore within her the emotional losses from “her” childhood.

You can see how this becomes an intergenerational issue, passed down. It is why I am here, in hopes not passing this onto my own kids.

Still to this day I have to be careful with eye contact with mom because she will begin to play the victim, pull me in with her eyes. Pulling my attention, my love, my affection — like a vampire — and after, I will feel dizzy, fatigued and depleted.

As my true self remained underdeveloped in childhood, eclipsed by my mother’s needs, thereafter in life, into adolescents and early adulthood, I was trained, controlled and built to become her surrogate husband, her confidant, to admire her and sustain her with unwavering, unconditional love and attention. What some psychologists refer to as a Narcissistic supply.

I secured love and a sense of being needed and not abandoned by playing this codependent role for my family. The oldest, the most caring, the most giving and eventually the scapegoat.

More troubling was that my true, sensitive, gifted, empathetic nature — that intuitively picked up on the dysfunction of my family — went undeveloped and became an interior feeling of emptiness.

And then it became full fledged alcoholism, constant anxiety, hyper-vigilance, panic attacks, and an inability to be with myself or alone.

In adult life as a quote on quote “old soul, the most trustworthy” — this has come to feel more like a lost childhood.

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It is clear as day now how this creates a lifetime of being outward focused, obsessed with being needed by others, being more concerned with how I appear to others and how I am meeting others needs and ensuring their happiness before my own. All the while hiding and feeling ashamed of my authentic self.

As I said in my case, to cope with the shame, it turned into an entire life of doing, trying to be something more than I was to find the wholeness — unable to just be...

From: skateboarder, to saxophone player, football player, martial artist, cage fighter, playboy, artist, salesman, listening ear, empath, recovering alcoholic, editor, film-maker, writer, director, famous documentarian, world traveler, wealthy, intelligent, father, husband, friend, helper, advocate of others, altruist, sponsor, teacher, leader.

I have built false self after false self in hopes of escaping this core issue of Toxic SHAME.

This feeling of being, at my core, defective, unlovable, empty, and worthless.

It seems the longer I journey in CoDA the work has been to heal the SHAME.

Reconnecting with the abandoned child within as I reparent myself appropriately, finding healing in God's unconditional love, and finding the eyes of healthy people in recovery that can appropriately mirror my authentic self.

As my sponsor recently said, Eliot "how do you feel? It's okay to feel, to feel sad, to feel angry, to feel the gamut of emotion."

Ultimately the work in this recovery program feels like the work of reclaiming my authentic, sensitive, intuitive, emotional self and restoring the losses from childhood.

Dropping the many masks, strategies and coping mechanisms I have picked up through the years to hide my true vulnerable authentic self.

Eliot R.



- Caryn T.

## "Trusting in the Sunshine"

This is a poem I wrote about overcoming codependency with God as my guide

Trusting In The Sunshine

How have you done this? How could you know?

My heart felt so broken and bitter and cold

But you knew the sunshine was within my reach

Watching me, patiently, waiting to teach

My heart couldn't take I felt I would fall

Past all redeeming I built up a wall

So tired from fear and from pain

But you called to my heart so I could begin again

It must have hurt to see me feeling so broken

I know you watched earnestly for me to be awoken

Knowing that your light would bring confidence and peace

They left the moment I doubted my faith to believe

When I wanted to run and hide from my shame

You helped get my head and heart back in the game

Showing me as you always do

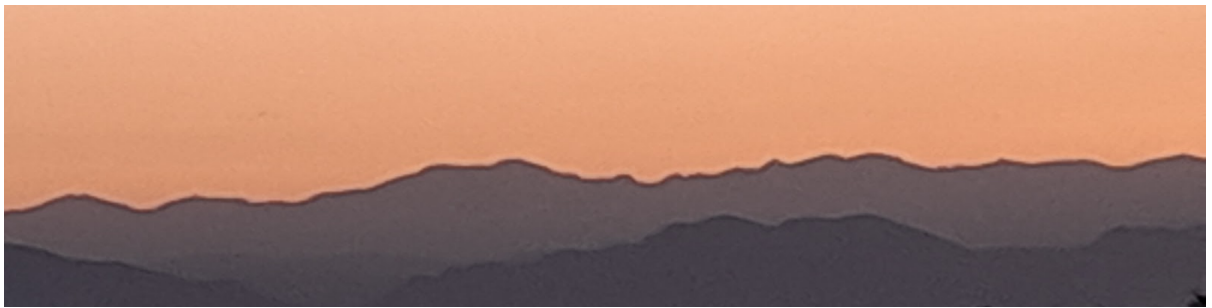
That your love is enduring constant and true

Faith became the anchor, hope my guiding star

To lead me gently back into your loving arms

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You offered forgiveness which then set me free  
So now I can be who you need me to be  
Your love is a lighthouse, steady and strong  
When the waves of doubt are dragging me down  
My rescue is certain the storm will subside  
When I offer my heart and let you be my guide  
Mira M. 3/25/2023



- Caryn T.

## **"A Partnership"**

He cannot give me what I want.  
Can I be what I want?  
I am not what he wanted.  
We settle into who we are.  
Sharing a love neither of us expected and  
Neither of us wanted.  
Anonymous 3/28/2023

## **"She Blossoms in CoDA"**

Because of my recovery journey, I felt that I was relatively peaceful and happy. There was something that I was still looking for, I wasn't sure what it was or how it would show up. I called it my quest for inner freedom. An area that had not been firmly tapped. I did not know what it was or how I was to achieve this, I just knew that it was there and I was being called forth to check it out. I was diagnosed with late-stage cancer, I commented out loud to myself on how very grateful I was to find this place, before I became ill. I was in a place of calm acceptance and peace.

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I received the intuition to dial into a CoDA workshop, I had never attended a meeting before. I believe I was guided to do this by my Higher Power. I listened to a young woman talk about patterns and characteristics. I started to weep, a sorrow so deep that I did not think I would be able to breathe. Every painful thing that I had stored up over a lifetime, started pouring out. I was able to locate the speaker and asked if she could help me. I also told her there may not be a lot of time and I had put this quest on my bucket list. No pressure here, ha ha ha.

She certainly rose to the occasion; the only slowdown has been with me. Before I could move forward, I needed to find somewhere safe, find the gentleness and kindness towards myself, the stuff I would give to others, I now needed myself. I intuitively knew this.

Unbeknownst to me, there was a great deal of activity going on around me and inside of me. I was stunned to see that I had walked right into a hornet's nest. In CoDA I could see how I had been replicating everything done to me and against me for most of my life.

From my own lack of awareness, and others as well, I could see how my empathy, lack of boundaries and people pleasing, created, and existed in relationships that were unhealthy and deeply enmeshed. I had done this very same thing most of my life. I did this thinking this was love. I have redefined my definition of love and compassion. A comment from my previous mentor helped lead me to CoDA "you are going to have to earn your freedom." It was like a predesigned play where everyone stepped into the roles.

I had to recognize and give up my addiction to a dangerous excitement, as described by another's teen. I do not put my head down and go charging into the middle of the hornets' nest. I see my story more in line with Daniel being thrown into the lion's den. The lessons being, people will always let you down because they are human, never let anything distract you from your true heart, Higher Power will always be there. I am human, an infant, a child, a teen.. Some days I react as if someone grabbed a tiger by its tail. With the help of CoDA and all the different ways to receive and pass on the CoDA program, I am learning how to live a different way. If they handed out CoDA medallions I would have a suitcase of 10-second coins.

I found a relationship with my Higher Power based on a Love that is always faithful, loyal, and kind. A warm generous spirit that is always there, never critical, or judgmental, but willing to hold and support me. Friendly with an endless dollop of humor. Loves to sing, dance, and celebrate life in every way possible. Pure and boundless joy. Forever gentle, warm and compassionate. Lavishes kindness and grace. A safe place built on integrity and trust. Always charitable without enabling.

This is what my Higher Power gives to me. With the daily reprieve that CoDA offers, this is what I give and receive in healthy loving relationships. For whatever time is possible, this will be my journey for the rest of my life.

In gratitude  
Donna B 04-20-23



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## "Chosen + Choice"

My true self is My new self.  
My true self is when I become who God is molding me to become.  
But I have to choose to be My true self.  
I have to choose to listen to where He takes me.  
I have to choose to lean into what He is calling me to become.  
In order to choose, I must also choose to say no to other things.  
Choose to not live in My past.  
Choose to not live in My anxiety.  
Choose to not let Myself be stagnant.  
My true self is evolving and molding and moving.  
I must choose to move forward and be constantly choosing to choose.

My true self, My new self can't be anything like the old.  
I must choose to let go in order to move on.  
In order to be new I must let go of the past.  
Latching onto the past is choosing to stick to the untrue, stick to the lies, stick to the fake me.  
The pretend me, the confused me, the always frustrated, burnt out or tired me.  
Because not being My true self is tiring, it burns My energy to act like I'm not My true self.  
It takes up energy to put up a front to the world and be what they want from me and not what God wants from me.  
Whether I believe in God or not.  
It takes up so much exhausting energy to continue to live in the fakeness of pleasing others.

When do I choose that pleasing myself and living true is way more full and satisfying than choosing to keep up with the lies and pretend?  
What do I choose to hold on to?  
What do I choose to let go of?  
What do I choose every day to be true?  
What do I choose every day to be untrue?  
And what do I choose to do about knowing the difference?  
J. Cal 5/22/2023

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# Closing Readings

## **The Serenity Prayer**

God, grant me the Serenity  
to accept the things I cannot change,  
Courage to change the things I can,  
And Wisdom to know the difference.

## **Some Affirmations**

I recognize my good qualities  
I develop relationships with others based on equality, intimacy, and balance.  
My friends, sponsor and Higher Power are there for me.

## **CoDA Recovery Prayer**

God help me to:  
Accept other people as they are,  
Recognize my own feelings,  
Meet my own needs, and  
Love myself just as I am.

## **CoDA Closing Prayer**

We thank our Higher Power for all that we have received from this meeting.  
As we close, may we take with us the wisdom, love, acceptance, and hope of recovery.

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## Twelve Promises

1. I know a new sense of belonging. The feeling of emptiness and loneliness will disappear.
2. I am no longer controlled by my fears. I overcome my fears and act with courage, integrity and dignity.
3. I know a new freedom.
4. I release myself from worry, guilt, and regret about my past and present. I am aware enough not to repeat it.
5. I know a new love and acceptance of myself and others. I feel genuinely lovable, loving and loved.
6. I learn to see myself as equal to others. My new and renewed relationships are all with equal partners.
7. I am capable of developing and maintaining healthy and loving relationships. The need to control and manipulate others will disappear as I learn to trust those who are trustworthy.
8. I learn that it is possible to mend – to become more loving, intimate and supportive. I have the choice of communicating with my family in a way which is safe for me and respectful of them.
9. I acknowledge that I am a unique and precious creation.
10. I no longer need to rely solely on others to provide my sense of worth.
11. I trust the guidance I receive from my Higher Power and come to believe in my own capabilities.
12. I gradually experience serenity, strength, and spiritual growth in my daily life.



- *Alison*

## **Resources:**

Find a Meeting - <https://coda.org/find-a-meeting/>

Subscribe to Email lists - <https://www.codependents.org/sub.htm>

CoDA's Events Calendar - <https://coda.org/calendar/>

YouTube - <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC0oWXZDpoVdKbyJOYDh1zTQ/playlists>

If links are not active, copy and paste the url into your browser.

## **Request for Content**

This publication thrives when fellow CoDAs share their recovery. This is a great place to express your creativity through prose (200-2000 words), poetry and artistic images, as long as it follows CoDA's Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions and the Co-NNections Editorial Policy.

See <https://coda.org/service-info/connections-service-info-page/> for more information.